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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their 29th meeting, held in New York from 26 to 30 June 2017, pursuant to Assembly resolution 57/202.

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Report of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their 29th meeting

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/202, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly the reports of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their periodic meetings, convened annually pursuant to Assembly resolution 49/178. The present document contains the report of the 29th meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies, which was held from 26 to 30 June 2017. The meeting was convened in New York in the light of the call of the Assembly in its resolution 68/268 for strengthened interaction with States. The Chairs discussed, among other topics, the problem of late and non-reporting by States parties, procedures of the human rights treaty bodies for following up on concluding observations and views and a common approach to engagement with national human rights institutions. Welcoming all initiatives that seek to collect innovative ideas in the light of the review of the treaty body system by the Assembly in 2020, in accordance with paragraph 41 of resolution 68/268, the Chairs reiterated their commitment to remain engaged at all stages of the various processes. They also held consultations with States, civil society organizations and United Nations entities. The decisions and recommendations of the Chairs are contained in section VI of the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. The 29th meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies was held in New York from 26 to 30 June 2017. As 26 June was an official holiday at the United Nations in New York, the Chairs met outside United Nations premises for informal meetings. The meeting of the Chairs is a forum for the Chairs of treaty bodies to maintain communication and dialogue with each other on common issues and problems, first called for by the General Assembly in 1983 in its resolution 38/117. The Assembly, in its resolution 57/202, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly the reports of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on their periodic meetings. In paragraph 38 of its resolution 68/268, the Assembly further encouraged the human rights treaty bodies, with a view to accelerating the harmonization of the treaty body system, to continue to enhance the role of their Chairs in relation to procedural matters, including with respect to formulating conclusions on issues related to working methods and procedural matters, promptly generalizing good practices and methodologies among all treaty bodies, ensuring coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods.

2. The meetings of the Chairs, convened annually pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178, are generally held on a rotating basis in Geneva, New York and the regions. The meeting for 2017 was held in New York based on the recommendation by the Chairs in 2016 in the light of General Assembly resolution 68/268, and in particular of the call by States parties to strengthen interaction with them in New York and of the 2020 review of the resolution by the Assembly. For further information on the meetings, see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/AnnualMeeting.

3. The following documents served as background to the meeting:

(a) Provisional agenda and annotations (HRI/MC/2017/1);

(b) Note by the Secretariat on compliance by States parties with their reporting obligations to international human rights treaty bodies (HRI/MC/2017/2);

(c) Note by the Secretariat on procedures of the human rights treaty bodies for following up on concluding observations, decisions and views (HRI/MC/2017/4);

(d) Note by the Secretariat on a common approach to engagement with national human rights institutions (HRI/MC/2017/3).

II. Organization of the meeting

4. The meeting was attended by the following Chairs and one Vice-Chair: Anastasia Crickley, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; Dalia Leinarte, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Jens Modvig, Committee against Torture; Jose Brillantes, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; Malcolm Evans, Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture; Renate Winter, Committee on the Rights of the Child; Suela Janina (Vice-Chair), Committee on Enforced Disappearances; Theresia Degener, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Virginia Bras Gomes, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Yuji Iwasawa, Human Rights Committee.

5. The Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Adam Abdelmoula, opened the meeting and welcomed the Chairs. He explained that the Division not only provides support to the 10 human rights treaty bodies to discharge their mandates, but also seeks to ensure full implementation of

the recommendations issued to States parties by advocating for the adoption of national follow-up action plans and by offering a range of technical assistance services. He recalled that through the field presences of OHCHR, the Office is engaging with national Governments, parliaments and the national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up to integrate treaty body recommendations in their national action plans. In addition, OHCHR is seeking to increase partnerships with United Nations country teams, United Nations agencies, civil society and national human rights institutions. Reiterating the relevance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the work of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, he informed the Chairs that OHCHR would like to reinforce this link by supporting the treaty bodies in their work related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch of OHCHR, Ibrahim Salama, reminded the Chairs that the annual meeting was an opportunity for them to reflect on the progress they have made in bringing greater coherence to the system, particularly in response to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 68/268. He recalled that in 2016 the Secretary-General submitted his first report on the status of the human rights treaty body system (A/71/118) to the Assembly. The report highlighted the need for additional resources for the work of the treaty bodies, particularly with regard to the increasing number of individual communications and inquiries, the webcasting of the public meetings of the treaty bodies and the work of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.

7. Ms. Virginia Bras Gomes was elected the Chair of the 29th annual meeting. She welcomed the newly appointed Chairs to their first meeting of the treaty body Chairs and expressed her commitment to preserving and deepening the spirit of collegiality, commitment and leadership that had characterized the meetings in previous years. She recalled that the members of the treaty bodies were defined as independent experts who monitor the implementation by States of the international human rights norms and thus bring life to international norms and standards. She stated that, in the build-up to the 2018 biennial report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 68/268 and to the review of the treaty body system by the General Assembly in 2020, reading that definition had reminded her that it was a privilege to belong to the group of custodians of the respective treaties. She reminded the meeting that all treaty body members belonged to one system and one shared fundamental objective, which was to promote better implementation of all human rights on the ground and especially for those in need of the protection of States. She recalled that resolution 68/268 had several paragraphs encouraging or inviting either the treaty bodies or the chairs of the treaty bodies to undertake harmonization efforts and to lead such efforts. She remarked that the informal exchange among all Chairs on the first day of the annual meeting clearly demonstrated that they would continue to take this encouragement by the Assembly as a basis for their discussions, which would be grounded in the experience of their respective committees.

III. Summary of the discussions

A. Compliance by States parties with their reporting obligations to international human rights treaty bodies

8. The Secretariat had prepared a note on compliance by States parties with their reporting obligations (HRI/MC/2017/2) to facilitate the discussion of the Chairs. The Chairs expressed concern that late and non-reporting by States parties continued to undermine the effectiveness of the treaty body system. Some Chairs noted that the simplified reporting procedure has assisted reporting by State parties.

Others noted that the practice of examining States parties in the absence of a State party's report had been positive, as it usually yielded a response from the State and triggered submission of the report before it came up for consideration. The Chair of the Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights shared the positive experience of the Committee in calling for a meeting with all States with overdue reports to encourage them to report. Such discussions with the States emphasized the importance of constructive dialogue and had led some States to send their reports. The Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture had a practice of writing to States parties whose compliance with the obligations set out in article 17 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment was substantially overdue. The Subcommittee makes public, on its website, the list of States with an outstanding obligation (www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/OPCAT/Pages/Article17.aspx).

B. Follow-up to concluding observations and views

9. The meeting had before it a note by the Secretariat on procedures for the follow-up to concluding observations and views (HRI/MC/2017/4). The note details various existing follow-up procedures adopted by treaty bodies. At present, the Committee on the Rights of the Child is the only committee without any follow-up procedure. The Chairs reaffirmed the importance of follow-up procedures and decided to identify common elements in relation to the practices of their respective treaty bodies concerning follow-up to concluding observations and views. The Chairs reiterated that treaty bodies should consider recommending to States that they establish a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up where these do not exist.

C. Implementation by the treaty bodies of the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (Addis Ababa guidelines)

10. Taking stock of the adoption and implementation by the treaty bodies of the Addis Ababa guidelines (A/67/222 and Corr.1, annex I), the Chairs underscored the importance of the nomination and election process by States parties to ensure that independent, expert and diverse candidates are elected to serve on the treaty bodies. In that regard, they recalled the primary role of State parties to ensure that independent candidates were elected to the treaty bodies. At present, treaty bodies have adopted different approaches and practices to dealing with members with perceived or actual conflicts of interest. Each Chair shared his/her committee's most recent practices and experiences in implementing the guidelines, such as with regard to non-participation of members during: (a) preparations for the constructive dialogue; (b) the interactive dialogue with States; (c) drafting and adoption of concluding observations; (d) examination of the communications that relate to their own country or countries of nationality; and (e) during the field visits, particularly in the case of Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.

D. Implementation by the treaty bodies of the guidelines against intimidation or reprisals (San José guidelines)

11. Andrew Gilmour, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and a senior official designated by the Secretary-General to lead the efforts within the United Nations system to address reprisals, attended the meeting of the Chairs to

deliver a few remarks about reprisals, particularly his efforts within the United Nations system to put a stop to intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the United Nations on human rights. He expressed deep concern over the growing number of reprisals against people cooperating with the United Nations and expressed his intention to work in close cooperation with all the treaty bodies. The Chairs conveyed their strong interest in strengthening coordination and cooperation with the Assistant Secretary-General in responding to reprisals.

E. Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the treaty body system

12. The Chairs expressed a strong commitment to remaining engaged in the treaty body strengthening process and, therefore, to playing a proactive role in the review of the treaty body system by the General Assembly in 2020, as envisioned in Assembly resolution 68/268. The Chairs also noted that the future of the treaty body system was heavily dependent on their own working methods and procedures and, therefore, progressive reform of the system demanded changes in their working methods and procedures. The Chairs also noted that the working methods and procedures of the treaty bodies contributed to a more effective system and that they had accordingly been engaged in progressively aligning their working methods and procedures in a number of areas.

13. The Chairs agreed that the parameters of any such envisioned reform of the treaty body system should ultimately: (a) strengthen protection of rights holders; (b) preserve the integrity of the treaty body system and of the independence of both the committees and their experts; (c) enhance implementation of treaty obligations and the related recommendations of treaty bodies; (d) balance the need for more aligned procedures and working methods with the specific mandates of each treaty body; (e) develop more predictable and coordinated calendars for examining States parties' reports; and (f) strengthen synergies within the treaty body system and with other human rights mechanisms.

F. Engagement of national human rights institutions with the treaty bodies

14. During their 28th meeting, the Chairs proposed to include in the agenda of their 29th annual meeting an item on harmonization of working methods for engagement with national human rights institutions. Following their constructive engagement with the representative of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions during the 29th meeting, the Chairs discussed a common treaty body approach to engagement with national human rights institutions. After closely reviewing the note by the Secretariat on this topic (HRI/MC/2017/3), the Chairs endorsed a number of recommendations in the areas of: (a) reporting; (b) communications; (c) inquiry; (d) follow-up to recommendations; (e) designating formal roles for national human rights institutions within human rights treaties; and (f) further avenues for engagement. All relevant recommendations are included in section VI.F of the present report.

IV. Consultations

A. Consultation with States

15. In paragraph 39 of its resolution 68/268, the General Assembly encouraged the human rights treaty bodies to strengthen the possibilities for interaction during the annual meetings of the Chairs of the treaty bodies with States parties to all human rights treaties, held in Geneva and New York, with a view to ensuring a forum for an open and formal interactive dialogue.

16. The Chairs held consultations with States parties on 28 June 2017. After a brief introductory statement by the Chair of the 29th meeting, each of the Chairs took the floor to introduce the treaty body they represented. In the exchange that followed, numerous States voiced strong support for the work of the treaty bodies and expressed their continued commitment to the treaty body system in the General Assembly. In line with resolution 68/268, States highlighted the need for increased harmonization of working methods of treaty bodies which would benefit all stakeholders. Citing the first progress report of the Secretary-General to the Assembly (A/71/118), which indicated that harmonization of working methods was progressing with varying results, several States expressed concern that it was becoming more difficult for States to comply with their reporting obligations; they therefore encouraged harmonization of working methods, increased use of the simplified reporting procedure, adoption of a calendar with a more even distribution of reporting obligations and adoption of more targeted recommendations.

17. Some States pointed out that the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268 was an important step in the right direction; however, it was not the end of the treaty body strengthening process. Those States suggested that synergies should be created among treaty bodies to increase their impact. The impact of the work of the treaty bodies could be enhanced through creative solutions and increased coordination and cooperation with special procedures mandate holders, OHCHR, national human rights institutions, civil society and regional bodies and that could lead to a viable solution to the challenges facing the treaty body system. States also highlighted that the implementation of the Addis Ababa guidelines was instrumental in ensuring the independence of the treaty body members. In reply, each of the Chairs dealt with a specific theme on behalf of all the Chairs, in order to reinforce the idea that they were speaking as representatives of a system, rather than only on behalf of their own treaty body.

B. Consultation with civil society organizations

18. The Chairs met with civil society organizations to explore ways and means of strengthening their engagement with the treaty bodies and to discuss the role of civil society in following up at the national level on recommendations and decisions emanating from the treaty bodies. Civil society organizations submitted written (and joint) submissions, which are available on the OHCHR website.

19. In a joint submission, 21 civil society organizations recalled that the current framework of the annual meeting of Chairs made it primarily a consultative body rather than a decision-making one. They therefore encouraged the Chairs to consider reviewing the mandate of the annual meeting with a view to improving the overall coordination among treaty bodies. Representatives of civil society organizations also encouraged action by the Chairs to harmonize working methods and to establish inter-committee working groups as necessary, to discuss topics for harmonization as indicated in General Assembly resolution 68/268. The

representatives also recommended that treaty bodies should play a proactive role in proposing ambitious reforms as part of the strengthening process, as well as consider the political risks of a new round of intergovernmental negotiations, particularly the implications on the independence and effectiveness of the treaty body system.

20. Welcoming statements on human rights defenders by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the representatives of the civil society organizations encouraged the two treaty bodies that have not yet formally and fully adopted the San José guidelines to do so. Noting that the Sustainable Development Goals constituted the main international framework for international aid and sustainable development, participants encouraged all treaty bodies to consider the Goals, targets and indicators in their lists of issues and lists of issues prior to reporting, as well as make reference to the Goals in the constructive dialogues and concluding observations as they relate to relevant treaty provisions. The Chairs took good note of all the suggestions made by the civil society organizations, reiterating that some of those suggestions, for example concerning the mandate of the annual meeting of the Chairs, were not entirely dependent on their own decisions.

21. The treaty body Chairs also held a dialogue with Ms. Montserrat Solano Carboni, Ombudsperson of Costa Rica and Vice Chair of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, to discuss ways to further enhance the engagement of national human rights institutions with the treaty bodies and to strengthen national implementation of treaty provisions.

C. Consultation with United Nations entities

22. The Chairs met with representatives of the United Nations agencies and entities on 29 June 2017. The Chairs acknowledged that the treaty body members greatly benefited from the oral and written briefings by United Nations entities; however, they also expressed concern regarding the lack of contribution in the area of economic, social and cultural rights. Various participants referred to their experiences in cooperating with the treaty bodies, particularly in the preparation of input for State reviews and follow-up to the concluding observations. The Development Operations Coordination Office highlighted that one of the challenges to United Nations country teams was that it was not always clear what was the best time to engage with the treaty bodies. The representative noted that OHCHR had started a practice of sending letters to all Resident Coordinators each year to signal treaty body and universal periodic reviews to country teams, which had been helpful to address the information gap.

23. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlighted that it was mandatory for all UNDP country offices to use a human-rights based approach, particularly in the planning phase. With regard to integrating treaty body outputs into the planning framework, sometimes the timing of the adoption of the concluding observations did not fit in with an ongoing programming cycle. Some United Nations agencies expressed concern that the proliferation of United Nations human rights recommendations posed practical challenges with regard to follow-up. They also highlighted that treaty body recommendations could be used in particular in the review framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, especially when a State was not reporting voluntarily on a yearly basis. Participants also discussed ways to enhance the follow-up to and impact of State reviews by treaty bodies, highlighting the potential for increased synergies between the normative work of treaty bodies and the implementation of their recommendations by States with the support of United Nations entities.

V. Other matters

A. Treaty bodies and the Sustainable Development Goals

24. A representative of the OHCHR New York Office provided a briefing on the interlinkages between the work of the treaty bodies and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Chairs spoke of the need to strengthen their efforts to integrate the Goals into their reporting guidelines, as well as into constructive dialogues and concluding observations.

B. Strategies for increasing the visibility of the treaty body system

25. The Chairs discussed the need to increase the visibility and knowledge of the work of the treaty bodies among States, civil society and United Nations entities. A representative of the OHCHR Geneva Office gave an overview of the progress achieved so far and proposed a communications strategy to increase the visibility and presence in national and social media.

VI. Decisions and recommendations

A. Role of the Chairs in the area of working methods and the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268

26. The Chairs reiterated their support for strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the treaty body system as reflected in General Assembly resolution 68/268. The Chairs agreed to a common framework identifying elements that form the basis for aligned procedures and working methods, while recognizing the specificity of the practices of the various treaty bodies based on their respective treaties and mandates. The following areas of this framework have already been progressively addressed by the Chairs: (a) the constructive dialogue with States parties; (b) the adoption of more focused, targeted and implementable concluding observations; (c) the simplified reporting procedure; (d) the methodology for the consultation process for the elaboration of general comments; (e) the engagement with national human rights institutions; and (f) the implementation of the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (Addis Ababa guidelines). The Chairs also decided to identify further elements for discussion within their respective Committees that could enhance the alignment of working methods in the following areas: (a) follow-up on concluding observations and views; (b) inquiry procedures; (c) reprisals; and (d) remedies.

27. The Chairs requested OHCHR to prepare a document for discussion before the 30th annual meeting of Chairs identifying the progress achieved in aligning the working methods and practices of the treaty bodies in the various areas addressed in General Assembly resolution 68/268, as well as those areas on which the Chairs will continue to work towards enhanced alignment.

28. In that context, the Chairs recalled the encouragement by the General Assembly to the treaty bodies to continue to enhance the role of the Chairs in relation to procedural matters, including with respect to formulating conclusions on issues related to working methods, generalizing good practices and methodologies across all treaty bodies, ensuring coherence across the treaty bodies and standardizing working methods.

29. Welcoming all initiatives that seek to collect innovative ideas in the light of the 2020 review of the treaty body system by the General Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 41 of resolution 68/268, the Chairs reiterated that the views of the treaty bodies and their Chairs should be sought and they resolved to remain engaged at all stages of those processes. They agreed that the following parameters will be crucial in reviewing the sustainability of the measures taken and, if appropriate, deciding on further action to strengthen and enhance the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system: (a) strengthened protection of rights holders; (b) preservation of the integrity of the treaty body system and of the independence of both the committees and their experts; (c) enhanced implementation of treaty obligations and the related recommendations of treaty bodies; (d) balancing the need for more aligned procedures and working methods with the specific mandates of each treaty body; (e) developing a more predictable and coordinated calendar for examining States parties' reports; and (f) strengthening synergies within the treaty body system and with other human rights mechanisms.

30. While welcoming the improvements resulting from General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Chairs reiterated the need for OHCHR to have the material and human resources necessary for the treaty bodies to perform their work as required by the treaties. In particular, they stressed that any further growth in the workload of the treaty body system cannot be absorbed within existing resources, in line with Assembly resolution 68/268 which provides a mechanism to adapt resources to workloads.

B. Ratification and reporting compliance by States

31. The Chairs called for the universal ratification by States of international and regional human rights treaties. Welcoming the note by the Secretariat on compliance by States parties with their reporting obligations to international human rights treaty bodies (HRI/MC/2017/2), the Chairs expressed concern regarding the large number of States whose reports were still overdue and the protection gap that created for rights holders.

32. The Chairs encouraged all States facing capacity constraints to solicit the technical assistance and advisory services of the OHCHR treaty body capacity-building programme created under General Assembly resolution 68/268, which specifically provides for technical assistance to States for reporting to the treaty bodies, and welcomed the efforts already undertaken to develop the capacities of States to implement the treaties, including by supporting national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up.

33. The Chairs also welcomed the efforts undertaken by United Nations country teams to submit country-specific information for the reporting processes of the treaty bodies, follow up on the implementation of their recommendations and facilitate country visits by treaty bodies, and invited country teams and individual United Nations agencies to continue intensifying those efforts.

34. The Chairs recommended that all treaty bodies, as appropriate, define objective criteria and align modalities for and promote the application of the simplified reporting procedure as a means to improve reporting compliance by States parties.

35. The Chairs reiterated that treaty bodies should consider recommending to States that they establish national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up, considering that the States that have established such national mechanisms

have increased their ability to report and engage with the international and regional human rights systems.

36. In addition, the Chairs suggested that treaty bodies consider meeting with States parties whose reports are more than 10 years overdue to assess their needs, and took note of the good practices of some treaty bodies in that regard.

37. The Chairs reaffirmed the decision taken at previous meetings to include reporting compliance by States parties as a standing item on the agenda of the annual meeting of the Chairs. They further requested OHCHR to continue to update the statistics on reporting compliance by States on its website.

C. Implementation of the guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (Addis Ababa guidelines)

38. The Chairs appreciated the broad support for the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of treaty body members and recommended that the implementation and use by all treaty bodies of the guidelines be ensured.

39. The Chairs also reiterated that States should refrain from nominating or electing persons to the treaty bodies whose independence and impartiality was compromised by the political nature of their affiliation with the executive branch of the State.

40. Members of treaty bodies should consequently avoid functions or activities which could be, or could be seen by a reasonable observer to be, incompatible with the obligations and responsibilities of independent experts under the relevant treaties. Encouraging further harmonization, the Chairs took note of good practices of treaty bodies in relation to the designation of country rapporteurs and the participation of treaty body members in training workshops before or following the consideration of the State party concerned, aimed to ensure that members continue to carry out their functions independently and impartially and are also seen to do so.

D. Implementation of the guidelines against intimidation or reprisals (San José guidelines)

41. The Chairs appreciated the broad support for the San José guidelines against intimidation or reprisals and recommended that all treaty bodies endorse and ensure the implementation of the guidelines.

42. The Chairs reiterated their recommendation that the rapporteur(s) or focal point(s) on reprisals appointed in the respective treaty bodies should work together to align the approaches taken to prevent intimidation and protect individuals and groups against reprisals in order to enhance consistency across the treaty body system, including through meetings as appropriate.

43. The Chairs also reaffirmed their decision, first made at their 26th meeting, to include reprisals as a standing item on the agenda of the annual meeting of the Chairs.

E. Follow-up to concluding observations and views

44. **Welcoming the note by the Secretariat on procedures of the human rights treaty bodies for following up on concluding observations, decisions and views (HRI/MC/2017/4), the Chairs exchanged views and decided to identify common elements in relation to the practices of their respective treaty bodies concerning follow-up to concluding observations, decisions and views.**

F. Common approach to engagement with national human rights institutions

45. **Following their constructive engagement with the representative of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions during their 29th meeting, the Chairs discussed a common approach by treaty bodies to engagement with national human rights institutions. The Chairs considered possible areas in a common approach to engagement with national human rights institutions as summarized in section IX of the note by the Secretariat contained in document HRI/MC/2017/3.**

46. **The Chairs decided to endorse the following recommendations:**

Reporting process

(a) **The Chairs recognized the particular value of national human rights institutions accredited with "A" status by the Global Alliance in the reporting process, while acknowledging that engagement with other specialized bodies is important. National human rights institutions are encouraged to cooperate with those bodies;**

(b) **In addition to the participation of national human rights institutions during the session, it is fundamental for national human rights institutions to have an opportunity to be involved at the pre-session stage. In that regard, public and private meetings with the institutions should be possible, depending on the situation in the country. National human rights institutions should also be encouraged to provide information for the formulation of the lists of issues for the dialogue with States. Written and oral contributions of national human rights institutions are encouraged at all stages of the State reporting process;**

Communications procedure

(c) **National human rights institutions should raise awareness and build capacity on the communications procedure, including promoting ratification by States of the necessary instruments. In addition:**

(i) **National human rights institutions could create a venue for dialogue with the State about the importance of the procedure and for victims to have access to such procedures at the international level;**

(ii) **National human rights institutions could facilitate or assist victims with filing petitions to the treaty bodies;**

(iii) **National human rights institutions could participate in the monitoring of the implementation of the remedies recommended in views in which violations have been found;**

Inquiry procedure

(d) The role of national human rights institutions is important at all stages of the inquiry procedure, while respecting the confidentiality of the proceedings. For example:

(i) National human rights institutions accredited with "A" status by the Global Alliance are important partners in the inquiry procedure and could provide support throughout the process, including in follow-up to the inquiry;

(ii) "A" status national human rights institutions are not the only actors in a situation. Often, there is no "A" status human rights institution in the country where serious human rights violations are occurring or they are not the only human rights body. Hence, engagement, as appropriate, with other institutions may be necessary;

(iii) Seeking engagement by the national human rights institution should be determined on a case-by-case basis by the treaty bodies during all stages of the inquiry process, including the preliminary assessment, the conduct of the inquiry (advisory role), during the country visit (to facilitate the visit and identify stakeholders, including witnesses and victims), and in follow-up to the recommendations;

(iv) During the preliminary assessment, national human rights institutions could provide information and help to assess it (advisory role);

(v) During the country visit, national human rights institutions could play an important role in facilitating the visit and in helping to identify stakeholders, including witnesses and victims;

(vi) The reporting responsibility rests with the treaty bodies, but national human rights institutions could play an important role in the follow-up of the recommendations of the treaty bodies by the State;

(vii) Confidentiality is critical to the inquiry process and is imposed by the relevant instruments. Maintaining confidentiality is closely related to the do-no-harm principle. Treaty bodies have the responsibility to uphold those principles, as do national human rights institutions engaged in the procedure. National human rights institutions accredited with "A" status by the Global Alliance in particular could play a role in the process as they would guarantee the established standards;

(viii) National human rights institutions accredited with "A" status by the Global Alliance could play an important role in preventing reprisals and providing witness protection;

Follow-up to recommendations

(e) Cooperation in relation to follow-up to recommendations could be further strengthened. For example:

(i) The development of a national action plan to follow up on recommendations would be worthwhile. States should be encouraged to seek the cooperation of national human rights institutions in the development of such plans and to implement recommendations in consultation with national human rights institutions and civil society;

(ii) The role of "A" status national human rights institutions should be recognized and further embedded in follow-up procedures and processes.

National human rights institutions should be formally invited to contribute to the follow-up of recommendations in their countries. Direct engagement by national human rights institutions with members of parliament, ministries and other public authorities is recommended;

(iii) National human rights institutions should communicate with States between reporting periods;

(iv) Follow-up visits by treaty bodies, organized in close consultation with national human rights institutions, would be welcome. Their effectiveness would relate to the timing of the conduct of the consultations;

(v) National human rights institutions should be encouraged to facilitate the dissemination of treaty body outputs. Accurate translation of treaty body outputs is essential and States should be encouraged to consult national human rights institutions in that regard;

National human rights institutions with formally designated roles within human rights treaties

(f) Cooperation with and among national human rights institutions, national monitoring mechanisms and national preventive mechanisms is important at the national level. In that respect:

(i) Further guidance on interaction with treaty bodies for national human rights institutions with more than one mandate, for example those also functioning as a monitoring and/or preventive mechanism, is needed;

(ii) The Global Alliance could play a role in offering such guidance in conjunction with the treaty bodies concerned.

47. The Chairs also welcomed modalities of engagement of national human rights institutions with other stakeholders. A variety of stakeholders need to be engaged and held to account in relation to the work of the treaty bodies. National human rights institutions could function as a bridge in facilitating such engagement. For example:

(a) Cooperation with, inter alia, national parliaments, the judiciary, bar associations, civil society, the business sector, academia, the media and religious leaders could be fostered by national human rights institutions;

(b) Cooperation with regional and international human rights and other regional organizations that do not have a specific human rights mandate could be fostered by national human rights institutions.

48. The Chairs further welcomed other avenues for engagement with national human rights institutions. Although some existing avenues for engagement are already positive, there is still room for strengthening them, including the following:

(a) The Global Alliance Subcommittee on Accreditation could refer to the concluding observations of the treaty bodies so as to acknowledge and assess the performance of national human rights institutions and their level of compliance with the Paris Principles. In that regard, the practice of including references to the compliance of national human rights institutions with the Paris Principles in concluding observations is considered to be a good practice;

(b) The Global Alliance should provide regular updates to the treaty bodies on its accreditation process;

(c) National human rights institutions should be encouraged to prioritize advocacy in relation to ratification of treaties and optional protocols and withdrawal of reservations;

(d) Enhanced awareness-raising for national human rights institutions of the early warning and urgent action procedures of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the urgent action procedure of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances is encouraged;

(e) National human rights institutions should be encouraged to provide input for the development of general comments, including by participating in the days of general discussion and commenting on drafts posted for public comment on the websites of the treaty bodies;

(f) National human rights institutions should be encouraged to broadly disseminate general comments in their countries. OHCHR could further strengthen the timely notification of their issuance;

(g) Both national human rights institutions and treaty bodies play a role in the adoption of the San José guidelines. There are limitations on both sides: the do-no-harm principle must apply; and witnesses must be made aware of the limitations of both bodies;

(h) More regular and systematic interactive relationships or meetings, including in-person or audio/video meetings, between individual treaty bodies and national human rights institutions and the Global Alliance should be held whenever possible;

(i) Enhanced cooperation with the Global Alliance office in Geneva would be welcome.

49. The Chairs took note of the practice of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to permit national human rights institutions to take the floor at the beginning and/or the end of the dialogue with a State party;

50. The Chairs also took note of the practice of some committees to encourage national human rights institutions to submit amicus curiae briefs to contribute to the information gathered by the treaty bodies in relation to individual communications, even though they may not be mandated to consider communications.

G. Remedies

51. The Chairs continued their exchange of views and decided to identify common elements with respect to the practices in the area of remedies in the different treaty bodies.

H. Inquiries

52. The Chairs continued their exchange of views with respect to the practices in the area of inquiries in the different treaty bodies and decided to further pursue that dialogue in order to promote increased alignment of the working methods of those treaty bodies with a mandate to conduct inquiries. They considered that it would help the alignment in relation to inquiry procedures if all treaty bodies undertaking country visits participated in this process, including the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.

I. Treaty bodies and the Sustainable Development Goals

53. **The Chairs welcomed the briefing provided by the OHCHR New York Office on the interlinkages between the work of the treaty bodies and the Sustainable Development Goals and took note of the practices of some committees of including references to the Goals in their lists of issues, lists of issues prior to reporting and concluding observations, as well as of efforts to integrate the Goals in their reporting guidelines.**

J. Human rights of young persons

54. **The Chairs recognized that the rights of young persons are protected under all international human rights treaties and recalled that all treaty bodies protect the human rights of young persons under their respective mandates.**

K. Global compact on migration

55. **The Chairs acknowledged the reassertion by Member States of their obligations under international human rights law in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1). They stressed that the global compact on migration, which is currently being negotiated as an outcome of the Declaration, must be grounded in and guided by existing international human rights norms and standards. They noted that while treaty bodies are encouraged, in accordance with their mandates, to support the State-led preparatory process for the compact, their direct engagement has not to date been sought. In order to further the capacity of the compact to protect and promote the human rights of all migrants, the Chairs urged that the treaty bodies be invited to participate in and contribute to all the consultations and ongoing processes.**

L. Agenda, location and chair of the 30th meeting of treaty body Chairs

56. **The Chairs decided to include the following items on the agenda of their 30th annual meeting:**

(a) **Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 68/268;**

(b) **General Assembly review of the treaty body system in 2020;**

(c) **Follow-up to concluding observations, decisions and views;**

(d) **Reporting compliance by States parties;**

(e) **Implementation of the Addis Ababa guidelines;**

(f) **Implementation of the San José guidelines;**

(g) **Treaty bodies and the Sustainable Development Goals;**

(h) **Inquiries;**

(i) **Additional issues arising in the work of the treaty bodies;**

(j) **Any other business.**

57. **The Chairs recalled that, in the light of General Assembly resolution 68/268, and in particular of the call by States parties to strengthen interaction**

with them in New York and of the 2020 review of the resolution by the Assembly, they had decided at their 28th meeting to hold the annual meetings of Chairs leading up to 2020 in New York. In that context, they also reiterated the wish to strengthen their relationship with the Secretary-General.

58. **The Chairs decided that, in accordance with the principle of rotation, the Chair of the 30th meeting of Chairs, in 2018, would be the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Vice-Chair would be the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.**